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SUBJECT: HU JINTAO SWEARS IN MACAU'S NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

¶1. On December 20, Macau celebrated the 10th anniversary of its return to mainland China and saw the transfer of power to a new Chief Executive (CE). Chinese President Hu Jintao presided over the swearing-in ceremony of Fernando Chui Sai-on, the former Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, as Macau's third-term CE, along with key government officials and members of the Executive Council. Heeding earlier central government calls for Macau to diversify its economy, Chui pledged to "actively develop the appropriate diversification of the economy," with increased emphasis on convention, exhibition, logistics and cultural industries, while strengthening oversight of the gaming industry. Chui also promised to improve governance, listen to public sentiment, build a clean government, and enhance quality of life for Macau citizens.

¶2. In a 16-minute speech, President Hu Jintao praised Macau's success and the progress achieved during the past decade but urged the Chui Administration to further strengthen rule of law, improve people-based governance, and facilitate a clean and effective government. Hu spelled out five "musts" for the new government: 1) must fully and correctly understand and implement the "one country, two systems" principle; 2) must strictly abide by the Basic Law; 3) must focus its efforts on sustainable development; 4) must safeguard social harmony and stability by all means; and 5) must nurture different types of talents to increase Macau's long-term competitiveness. Hu also mentioned Hong Kong in his speech, a move local analysts saw as unusual and which has raised alarm bells in Hong Kong's democratic circles. Some Hong Kong democrats took Hu's comments about the importance of "one country, two systems", along with his praise for Macau passing Article 23 national security legislation earlier in the year, as signs Beijing wants to see Hong Kong pass Article 23 legislation. Hong Kong Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Stephen Lam subsequently stated the Hong Kong government had no plans to introduce Article 23 legislation.

¶3. Meanwhile, and mostly hidden from participants in the celebrations, about a thousand demonstrators joined the proto-democratic New Macau Association (NMA) in a largely peaceful march calling for universal suffrage, the protection of people's livelihood, an end to government corruption, and the right for mainland-born children to settle in Macau. NMA submitted a petition with over 10,000 signatures to a Macau government representative. It had hoped to meet with the newly-appointed Chui administration to discuss their demands for democratic reforms, particularly for the CE to be elected by universal suffrage in 2019. NMA told local media the turnout was better than expected, claiming the government had "done a lot to control the scale" of the protest. NMA had earlier criticized the government for denying the group's request to display banners at various locations to advertise the protest. The group was only permitted to display one banner at the starting point of the march.

14. Other planned protests did not take place as two groups of Hong Kong activists were barred from entering Macau. Fourteen campaigners, including League of Social Democrats legislator Leung "Long Hair" Kwok-hung, who planned to petition President Hu Jintao for universal suffrage in Hong Kong, were stopped at the Macau ferry terminal and placed on ferries back to Hong Kong. Two activists from the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China also were turned away at the border, preventing them from petitioning Hu for the release of Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. Hong Kong media also reported two Hong Kong journalists were refused entry December 19. Although one of the reporters was planning to cover the anniversary celebrations, the other was traveling to the territory on holiday with her family.

MARUT